THE

RECONSTRUCTIONIST

DEDICATED TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF JUDAISM AS A RELIGIOUS CIVILIZATION, TO THE UPBUILDING OF ISRAEL'S ANCIENT HOMELAND, AND TO THE FURTHERANCE OF UNIVERSAL FREEDOM, JUSTICE AND PEACE.

Vol. IV. June 3, 1938 Sivan 4, 5698 No. 8

Editorials

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APPROBATION AND ADMONITION FOR THE AMERICAN JEWISH CONGRESS

Reflections On Jewish Community Organization in the United States

by SAMUEL DININ

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by IRVING LEVITAS

Correspondence

Published by

THE SOCIETY FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF JUDAISM

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The RECONSTRUCTIONIST is published bi-weekly for twenty consecutive issues starting in October, by The Society for the Advancement of Judaism, 15 West 86th St., New York, N. Y. Subscription $1.00 a year; foreign $1.25; individual copy 10 cents. Entered as second class matter January 9, 1935, at the Post Office, New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879.
The editorials represent the opinions of the editors only.
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EDITORIALS

Fascism in Jersey City

CONGREGATION Emanuel of Jersey City, New Jersey, has been asked to leave the quarters which it now rents from the Jewish Community Center of that city, because Rabbi Benjamin Plotkin, rabbi of the congregation, has been a relentless and courageous critic of Mayor (I-am-the-law) Hague. The reason given by the Center is that important members of the Center board refuse to contribute funds so long as the Center continues to house the congregation. Already the ouster order has received national publicity, and the fate of the Congregation has become a symbol of the victory or the defeat of democracy in its life-struggle with fascism.

Why, in spite of the reign of terrorism that marks Jersey City, in spite of the pogrom atmosphere that swept over Journal Square in that city some weeks ago when two congressmen planned to address the citizens, in spite of known civic corruption, in spite of every undemocratic manifestation, why, we ask, are the Jews of Jersey City willing to sacrifice a rabbi and his congregation and take refuge under the wings of the tyrant? Why, in spite of all that has gone before in Germany and Austria, are the Jews of Jersey City ready to denounce a rabbi as a "communist"? Do they know, as Prof. Solomon Flink of Newark University has said, that within a few days headlines in Berlin newspapers may state that Jews in this country are accusing their spiritual leaders of being communists?

There is only one reason why Jews, or any other human beings, would act in such a degrading manner: their jobs depend upon their loyalty to and continued support of Hague. The mayor has that city so completely under his control that practically no business or professional man dare attempt reform without losing his livelihood. The men and women of that city are slaves; fascism now functions there. But no lover of democracy can excuse the Jews of Jersey City for their conduct toward Congregation Emanuel because of such so-called extenuating circumstances. If they really believe in democracy, as they love so often to protest, they should be ready to sacrifice for it. Do they really imagine that democracy can be maintained without paying a price?

Now, it may be said that it is easy enough for editors to recommend self-sacrifice to others, that when one has a family to support self-sacrifice does not appear so inviting. True enough; but the editors contend that the vast majority of fellow Americans would eagerly respond to any appeal for aid on behalf of the victims of fascism in America. The defenders of democracy and the con-

tributors to such funds as the Joint Distribution Committee would not be less prepared to take the responsibility for stricken Jews of Jersey City than for the stricken Jews of Germany and Austria. Even more, the citizens of Jersey City have it within their grasp to become true heroes of American history.

A committee of rabbis, representing the various groups within Jewish life, are now (at the time of writing) negotiating with the officials of the Center for an amicable settlement of this deplorable controversy. The Congregation, its Sisterhood and Young People's Guild are behind Rabbi Plotkin. Messages of support and sympathy have come to him from all over the country. The Center, however, has received the approbation only, to our knowledge, of the Hudson County Benevolent Society, a philanthropic group whose members are in the same boat as all the rest of the inhabitants of Mayor Hague's domain.

If the members of the Center can be made to realize that American Jewry considers itself implicated in the situation, and is insistent upon the Congregation's remaining in the Center, the decision will undoubtedly be influenced. Letters and telegrams to the Jewish Community Center, Jersey City, are in order.

Approbation and Admonition For The American Jewish Congress

THE decision of the American Jewish Congress to change the form of its Plebiscite (Referendum it is now called because of the sinister connotation that the term Plebiscite has acquired) is to be commended. The four questions, some of which it would have been as hard to answer categorically as the proverbial, "Have you stopped beating your wife?", have been set aside. In their place a single and simple question is asked: "Do you favor a union of all American Jewish groups engaged in safeguarding the equal rights of Jews, which shall undertake to create, for the defense of such rights, a single all-inclusive agency organized on a democratic, representative basis, in accordance with American ideals?" The terms of the referendum do not commit the voter to the proposition that the American Jewish Congress must be the agency to represent American Jewry. This change is a significant gesture, designed, no doubt, to secure the participation in the elections of all who, like THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST, believe in the democratic principle in Jewish communal life, but have been critical of the program and methods of the Congress.

But just how much this gesture may mean will depend on the willingness of the Congress to make other changes, changes in its election procedure. The first of these must be to separate the referendum from the election. What use is there in a referendum as to whether Jewry wants a unified agency to represent it democratically, if the election goes on regardless of the results of the referendum? Assuming that only a small proportion of American Jewry votes affirmatively for a unified agency to represent it, will those who have been elected feel that they have received no mandate to proceed, or will they say that those who have abstained from voting have forfeited their right to a vote by default? Again, if a mass of affirmative votes on the referendum be recorded, but few votes cast for the election, will the conclusion be drawn that the voters want a united representation but do not want to be represented by candidates in whose nomination they have had no share? Or will those elected be seated, notwithstanding the fact that considerable numbers who voted for the referendum, and many others who may have refrained from voting showed that they did not regard them as representative? If the Congress is sincere in its gesture of wanting a united democratic agency to represent American Jewry, regardless of whether its own leadership or that of others be selected, it will hold the referendum before the

election. If there should be a preponderant affirmative vote registering the approval of great masses of our people, and only in that event, it would then be proper to arrange for elections. To such a referendum our own vote would be: yes.

But that is not all. If the election is to be truly democratic, another step must intervene between the completion of the referendum and the holding of the election. That step should be the convening of a constituent assembly of all national organizations that represent considerable numbers of Jews and are willing to participate. This assembly would have to determine the procedure of nomination and election of the "all-inclusive agency" of American Jewry and draft a tentative constitution for its organization. Only after these preliminaries can there be an election which will impress the Jewish public as democratic in its procedure and not as a mere device by which the present leadership of the Congress can perpetuate itself in power with an *appearance* of democracy.

We anticipate that supporters of the Congress may argue that, in view of the gravity of the Jewish situation, there is no time for such procedure. But we should like to call the attention of the Congress to the fact that it might have adopted such a democratic procedure a long time ago; that, as it recently reminded the American Jewish Committee, the emergency has been with us ever since Hitler's rise to power in 1933. The democratization of the Jewish method of dealing with the problem of defending Jewish rights is long overdue and must not be shoved aside now. The very difficulty of the problem calls for earnest deliberation rather than precipitate action. The organization through which the will of American Jewry is to express itself on all important issues must not be jerry-built. We believe that the time is ripe for effecting a really democratic method of dealing with Jewish problems. Here is the Congress's opportunity. We hope that it will have the wisdom to modify its program to meet the need.

Reflections On Jewish Community Organization in the United States

By Samuel Dinin

THE Reconstructionist position on Jewish community organization in the United States has been attacked as unrealistic, utopian and even as fascistic. The contention has been made that Jewish life is so disjointed, so factionalized, so diversified, that common and unified action is impossible. Judaism is so many different things to different Jews—to some nationality, to some religion, to some race, and to some a curse—that it is futile to expect Jews to get together on a common basis and to promote a common program. There are those who glorify the very lack of centralized communal control as ideal, for it gives every congregation, every organization and institution an autonomy and independence unknown in ecclesiastic and state bodies among other peoples. Such persons tend to view all those who wish to curtail this autonomy in any way as potential social fascists whose aim it is to force all the different factions and points of view in Jewish life into a particular corporate pattern.

It would be foolish to minimize the difficulties facing Jewish community organization and to underestimate the extent of the factionalization and disunity in Jewish life and the sheer indifference to Jewish life which will have to be overcome to achieve some kind of self-government. Nevertheless I feel that most of us are unduly pessimistic about the prospects of bringing about some kind of commu-

nal control, and a little historical reflection on the growth of Jewish community life in the United States will bear me out. Similarly, it would be unwise to discount the danger to the autonomy of individual associations and institutions that any kind of centralized control portends. But a little sociological reflection on the nature of community life should serve to dispel the exaggerated fears of community organization by showing the true relationship, in a healthy society, between the life and organization of the community and the life and organization of individual associations and institutions.

I

It is a much over-worked but none the less true observation that the Jewish community in the United States is comparatively young. The Jewish population in the U. S. in 1880 has been estimated at from three to four hundred thousand. Today there are over four and a half million Jews in this country. The vast bulk of American Jewry has thus come to this country during the past fifty years, largely from Eastern Europe. The Jewish population was constantly changing and constantly growing during this period. It was in a state of so rapid flux and in such process of adjustment that the organization of a stable and representative self-government encountered natural difficulties. The vast majority of the Jews who came to these shores were alien not only to America but to the American Jewish community. They had to find themselves economically, socially and culturally before they could be expected to participate in the new group life—Jewish and non-Jewish. Nevertheless the new immigrants, despite their untoward environmental circumstances and the changing character of the Jewish group, made remarkable progress in setting up Jewish communal agencies of one sort or another and in ordering and promoting their Jewish life. Of course they did not have to create Jewish communal organizations *de novo*. The existing American Jewish community had already established many national and local organizations to meet specific educational, philanthropic and religious needs. But in many cases these agencies did not meet the full requirements of the newer immigrants. For one thing, they were oligarchically controlled, and distributed their beneficent aid in the manner of enlightened despots. For another, the range of their activities did not encompass all the interests of the newcomers. These newcomers therefore created many communal agencies of their own. With increasing Americanization, the new American Jews cooperated more frequently and participated more intensively in the ordering and control of Jewish life. Before the outbreak of the Great War, there were many indications that American Jews desired, even if they were not ready for, Jewish self-government on a community basis. The abortive attempt to organize a Kehillah in New York is only one such example. The War put a stop to these endeavors at community organization.

The War created new conditions and new agencies. Jewries abroad made new demands on American Jews. American Jews became community-conscious on an international scale. The reconstruction of Palestine, the relief and reconstruction of Jewries, particularly in Eastern Europe, suffering from the disastrous effects of the War, became now the increasing concern of large portions of American Jewry. Other agencies established during the War period took on new functions. Thus the Jewish Welfare Board owes its existence largely to the attempt to care for the recreational and spiritual needs of Jewish soldiers and sailors. The end of the War also marked the end of immigration of Jews to America in great numbers. This unfavorable policy had one bright side. For the first time we could begin to expect stability and normalcy in the growth of the Jewish population.

The post-war prosperity created a boom in Jewish communal life. Many new synagogues and community centers and schools sprang up. Communal agen-

cies and bureaus multiplied by leaps and bounds. But just as the general prosperity was unnatural so was the growth in Jewish community life. The growth was not organic. It was not planned. It was unrelated to the needs and requirements of American Jewish life. It was not the product of a definite philosophy and program of Jewish life. It just grew, like Alice's neck.

The current depression has put a stop to the building of new institutions, but out of it are coming a number of spiritual gains. During the post-war boom years the Jews like the rest were lulled into a false security. They were seized by the new feverish desires to gain wealth and a place in the American scheme of things. With the growth of Jewish community life came also a growth, in certain quarters, of assimilationist tendencies and aspirations. The current depression period has also resulted in antithetical tendencies. On the one hand many Jews have become ensnared by "red assimilationism" and have thrown in their lot with the communists or with other groups, whose attitude toward Jewish life is negative or neutral. On the other hand there seems to be a resurgent interest in Jewish life and in Jewish community organization. The rise of Hitler has had its effects on Jewish life in this country, too. There are any number of signs that the Jewish community is ready and willing to achieve self-government. The growth in the number of community councils, the organization of the Council of Federation and Welfare Funds and many other signs are indication enough of the new spirit animating Jewish life.

There is thus no need for discouragement even on the basis of this scant historical survey. In the short space of two generations the Jewish community in the United States has gone as far as could be expected in the organization of its group life.

II

Associations, institutions, congregations, and even individuals fear community control and organization or dissociate themselves from community life because they are unaware of the relationship between the individual and the community and the relationship of community to institutions, associations and other forms of social organization. This also accounts for conflicting aims and purposes in community organizations. There is thus need, now more than ever, for elementary sociological knowledge and understanding of the nature of community and community life.

A community, Maciver tells us, is any area of *common* life. It may be a village, a town, a district, a country, or even a wider area. It may or may not be coterminous with a geographical or political city, nation, or state. All community is a question of the degree and the intensity of the integration of the common life. What manners, traditions, modes of speech, men living in community develop depend upon the effectiveness of the common life. The community may be as wide as the world or as small as the average district or town. "Yet even the poorest in social relationships is a member in a chain of social contacts which stretches to the world's end."

Community is not synonymous with state and is greater than any association or institution. Every state has rigid territorial limits, but a community may be wider than any state. "The community is a network of social interrelations, here denser, here thinner, whose ever new-woven filaments join men to men across countries and continents." A state is exclusive and determinate. No man can serve two States, but "he can enter into the life of as many communities as his sympathies and opportunities will allow." In a community, beings are guided from within, actively, spontaneously and freely. A state works with formal instruments and prescribes the external conditions of social life. The growth of civilization can only come with the growth of ever-widening community, the realization of social interest beyond the limits of politically independent groups.

A community is a focus of social life, the common living of social beings; an association is an *organization* of social life, definitely established for the pursuit of one or more common interests. An association is partial, a community is integral. Community is something freer than even the greater associations; it is the common life out of which associations arise, into which associations bring order, but which associations never completely fulfill. A community is a social unity, whose members recognize as common a sufficiency of interests to allow of the interactivities of common life. Every association is both an organization within community and an *organ of community.*

Institutions are forms of order established within social life by some common will. An association is more than a form; it is the creator as well as the created, it is the source of institutions. An association has a subjective as well as an objective aspect; it, too, is created by common will, but it consists in wills as organized in respect to some common interest. An institution has an objective aspect alone; it is a means alone. The association may modify its institutions, may dissolve some, and create others.

As community develops it unfolds within itself many associations, and these all build their own institutions and call with many voices to many allegiances. Thus the social being can no longer find the unity of his life in the mere acceptance of any single social claim, but only insofar as these various claims have been related and harmonized in the forms of his own responsive personality. That is the ethical realization and the ethical priority which yet appears last in time. And such realization can only come through social education.

It can readily be seen, from the very analysis of community, how significant are its implications for our problem—the Jewish community and its relationships to Federation, congregational activity, Jewish education.

Federations and congregations are associations, within Jewish community, organized for the pursuance of one or more common interests. Synagogues, schools, child-care agencies, are institutions. They are means by which we concretize and realize the aims and purposes of associations. Institutions are never ends in themselves, but means to ends, and when they are made ends in themselves, and not expressions of associations and of the community which makes associations possible, we have plain symptoms of an unhealthy community life.

The associations and institutions we have in Jewish life arose because we once had a Jewish community and Jewish communities. But the situation is such in Jewish life today that we have associations and institutions and no community. Institutions have become dominant in Jewish life, and death struggles are fought for their preservation in utter forgetfulness of what should be a simple and obvious sociological truth, namely, that institutions are but forms of order established by some common will whose source is associational and communal.

In this sense community precedes associations and institutions. Unless we have a *common* life, our institutions will become moribund and die, cut off like petrified forests, from living reality. The more intense, the more integrated, the more effective our common life—the richer, the greater, the more effective and more meaningful will be our associations and institutions.

In this sense, too, Jewish education, like worship, must be the expression of community life, and the school like the synagogue, must be an organ of the Jewish community. This does not mean that we must do away with congregations and congregational schools. It means that congregations and congregational schools will not be effective, will not grow, will not be meaningful unless they are coordinated in community. Associations need not and should not form a hierarchy within community, but a coordinate series. The service of the large community is to fulfill and not to destroy the

smaller, to give life and meaning to associations—not to stifle or suppress them.

III

An analysis of existing leading associations and institutions in various spheres of Jewish life shows, in a remarkable manner, how living communal organizations form and widen their spheres of interest. If an organism is really alive and lives to the full it becomes community minded even though it may be unconscious of the process. Our problem today is to make these associations aware of what has happened to them and why it has happened, to get them to make their future growth conscious.

Take for example organizations like the Arbeiter Ring, or Hadassah or the very recently organized Council of Federations and Welfare Funds. The Arbeiter Ring started out as a fraternal mutual aid society. It was an association of workers who wanted to fraternize for the sake of receiving protection and security and aid in time of sickness. At first it was supposed to be non-sectarian, but almost from the start no non-Jews joined the organization. During the early days of its existence the minutes of its meetings were recorded in German and in Russian. It was anti-religious in its views; in the minutes of the early meetings can be found cases of certain members being reprimanded and fined for going to a synagogue. But by a gradual process of evolutionary socialization, the organization grew in scope as it attempted to meet more and more of the common interests of its members and the interests its members had in common with Jews of all classes. The early members were immigrant Jews. They wanted to learn English and American history and acquire American citizenship. They therefore organized adult classes for this purpose. The only language of communication they all knew was Yiddish. Courses in Yiddish literature and courses on economics and trade unionism and labor questions and history, all given in Yiddish, were added. The members found they had social and cultural as well as economic interests in common. In time they established labor lyceums to serve as real centers for the expression of their interests, and widened their sphere of economic activity to include building of sanatoria, aid to trade unions, support of Yiddish dailies, Yiddish literature and the Yiddish Theatre. They became active in the general labor movement. They soon became aware that their children would become estranged from them unless they too were grounded in labor problems and knew Yiddish and Yiddish literature. Sunday schools and later week-day schools were opened and Yiddish, Yiddish literature, Jewish History, labor and economic history and problems and other courses were taught.

During the War, when all Jews were called upon to aid their brethren in Eastern Europe, the Arbeiter Ring, too, helped generously. After the War, the Jews attained minority rights and with it internal autonomy in a number of European states. School systems were established in which Yiddish was the medium of instruction. The Arbeiter Ring, together with other Jewish labor organizations, extended aid to the Jewish labor movement in the countries of Eastern Europe as well as to the educational and cultural activities of the labor organizations.

After the Balfour Declaration, Palestine took on a new lease on life. The labor movement in Palestine grew phenomenally until in 1923 the Histadrut had a membership of over 23,000. (Today its membership is over 100,000). The Arbeiter Ring together with other Jewish labor organizations in America became aware of the fact that one of the biggest and the best Jewish labor organizations in the world existed in little Palestine. Delegations were sent to Palestine and these were duly impressed by the work of the Histadrut and the work of reconstruction in Palestine. From being anti-Zionist the Arbeiter Ring became sympathetic supporters of the Palestine Histadrut, until today the Arbeiter Ring, and the other

labor organizations support the cause of Palestine actively.

Its militant anti-religious stand is today a thing of the past. It even cooperates with other Jewish organizations in communal matters. The Arbeiter Ring has gone a long way from its early character to the social institution of today with its broad sympathies and wide program of activities. The important problem facing this and similar organizations is to realize by what historical process they came to be what they are, that only by cultivating more and more the common life they share with other Jews and Jewish organizations will their own institutions retain their vigor and vitality and exert a healthy influence on American Jewish life.

There *have* been thinkers in this group who have, during this period, evolved a philosophy of Jewish life which reflects the changing aims and purposes of organizations such as the Arbeiter Ring. The term secular nationalism has been applied to this philosophy. The term reveals that, as far as religion is concerned, this group has little in common with those to whom religion is central in Judaism. Yet even among secular nationalists there has not been lacking the realization that what is needed is a reinterpretation of traditional religion rather than its liquidation. That there are many things which divide the Arbeiter Ring from other Jewish groups is obvious. But what we are prone to forget is that it has so many things in common with other Jewish groups. It is in these spheres that cooperative communal endeavor is needed. Only with such growing communal cooperation will these groups come together on a basis of mutual understanding if not of acceptance of the things which now divide them.

The phenomenal growth of Hadassah is another case in point. Those who founded Hadassah were Zionists in the full sense of the words—Jewesses who believed not only in the rebirth of Palestine but in the national rebirth of the Jewish people wherever it dwelt. But many of the early members who were attracted to the organization knew little or nothing of Zionist ideals and aspirations and less of Jewish life and culture. They joined because Hadassah appealed to them on a humanitarian basis. What Hadassah wanted was money for health work, for social services, for nurses. That it was for health work in Palestine was of secondary importance. Many of the same women were generous in their response to similar calls even if the cause were the relief of Armenians or Ethiopians. When Hadassah became fashionable, many women joined for social as well as for humanitarian reasons. It remained for a long while a non-partisan organization not interested in Zionist politics, and attempting to attract as large a number of women as possible on a broad humanitarian platform on which even non-Jews could stand. And yet Hadassah has transformed itself remarkably in one generation, until today it eclipses even the Z.O.A. in membership, in the scope of its work and interests, and in its concern not only with Palestinian problems but with problems of American Jewish life. There were many factors contributing to this transformation. The Balfour Declaration, the rise of Hitler, the resurgence of anti-Semitism in Europe and America are only some which need be mentioned.

It was a transformation which was gradual and in a sense almost inevitable. For a social organism which is alive is open to stimuli and widens the scope of its activities to provide for more and more of the common interests of its group. But a mere growth in all directions is not enough. The sagacious social organism as it matures tries to integrate the activities of the group on the basis of common aims and purposes, on the basis of a common philosophy. As the health work of Hadassah in Palestine grew in importance, Hadassah women came to see more and more, with their own eyes, what was done with the money contributed. From visits and reports, the Hadassah wo-

men naturally came to be interested in the specific projects, in the localities where these projects functioned, and gradually in all of Palestine. From that to a study of the meaning of Palestine, its role in Jewish life, was only a step. It is not necessary for us to trace all the steps in Hadassah's growth. But today Hadassah is not a non-partisan Zionist organization. It speaks with a forthright voice on all Zionist issues. It is not an organization which regards as its purpose helping other Jews find a haven of refuge in Palestine. It has come to see that Zionism has a profound message for all Jews—for the Jews in the Diaspora as well as for the Jews of Palestine; that real Zionism means a revival of Jewish life in the Diaspora as well as in Palestine. It has thus come to realize that to be true to its Zionist ideals, Hadassah must teach its own members the Hebraic culture it would establish in Palestine. It must make a healthy Jewish creative life possible in America too. To this end it has recently formulated a comprehensive educational program. Hadassah has not as yet begun to play an effective role in the organization of Jewish community life. But if it grows in the direction in which it has been growing, such an interest is inevitable. For soon, very soon, Hadassah will not be able to grow, unless American Jewry is able to set its communal house in order.

The National Council of Federations and Welfare Funds is another example of this process. It was organized only a few years ago, ostensibly for the purpose of getting heads of Federations and Welfare Funds to confer on common problems, to work cooperatively on some tasks so as to avoid duplication and waste. Willy nilly it has had to become more than a conference, more than an efficiency organization. It has become interested in problems of Jewish centers, of Jewish education, of vocational guidance, of research, and in many other problems. It has even become interested in the problem of community organization, of the organization of local community councils in every city where such organization is warranted. The test of the National Council of Federations and Welfare Funds is still to come, for it is a mere infant as an organization. If it ministers to the needs and interests of all the Jews it may yet be the saving of American Jewry. But if the present leaders of the Council try to organize a communal body run by a few oligarchs and plutocrats, ministering to the *minimum* needs of the masses and having in mind the common interests only of those in control—which means practically philanthropy, Sunday school education, and relief of Jewry in Eastern Europe, then it will grow only as a cancer on the body of the Jewish people in this country.

What has been said of the Workmen's Circle, the Hadassah and the National Council of Federation and Welfare Funds is equally true of the Council of Jewish Women, the Jewish Welfare Board, the B'nai B'rith, the Jewish National Workers Alliance and numerous other organizations. Each in its own way and at different times, has grown in community-mindedness, has become aware of the interrelationship and interpenetration of the special interests of their associations and institutions and those of the Jewish community in the widest sense. What is necessary now is to get them all to work together for the ends they have in common.

V

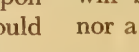
Mention of the National Council of Federations and Welfare Funds leads to one other problem connected with community organization. There is a fear, particularly among those whom we call assimilationists, that community organization is un-American. Ever since the question of partition of Palestine has come to the fore, these good Jews, who are mostly in control of the local Federations and Welfare Funds as well as of the National Council of Federations and Welfare Funds, are afraid that if a Jewish State is established their monetary contributions to Palestine will somehow be

taken as a sign of disloyalty to America. These Jews are afraid of Jewish nationalism in any form, and the thought of establishing an entire Jewish *civilization* in America makes them livid. They are fond of reiterating that they are American in everything save religion. Of course the paradox of their position is, that though they profess to be Jews by religion, these same Jews are not at all religious, in any sense of the word, and grace the synagogue with their presence only on rare occasions. It is difficulty, too, to understand why they contribute to the relief and education of Jews who differ from them altogether in their religious, national, and economic views. Evidently something more than religion binds them to the Jewish people.

Paradoxical, too, is the attitude of these Jews toward the role of government in the affairs of its citizens. These "assimilationist" plutocrats are as a whole rugged individualists, who fear collectivism in any form (save in trade and industrial monopolies), and fear the incursion of the government into what they consider the private affairs of the citizens of the country. Yet it is this very *laissez-faire* attitude of our government in the nineteenth century which made Jewish community organizations imperative. Neither the federal, state, nor city governments at first provided for the education of their citizens, for the sick and needy, the orphans and aged, for recreational and cultural activities. And even today, federal and local governments, save in the case of education, cannot take care of all the philanthropic and recreational needs of their citizens. It was thus left to the religious and ethnic groups to take care of all the needs of the members of their respective groups. Those who look upon parochial schools as un-American should remember that less than one hundred years ago all education was under church auspices; that even Reform synagogues conducted all-day schools which gave their charges both a secular and a Jewish education.

If to teach Hebrew or Yiddish, to promote Hebrew and Yiddish culture, to establish theatres and publish newspapers and books in Hebrew and Yiddish, is un-American, then we are in the same boat with fifty million other Americans, who do the same thing in German and Russian and Swedish and Italian and what not. This fear of calling Jewish life by its right name should be exposed for what it is. We do not need in Jewish life, and certainly not at the head of our institutions, Jews who are Jews out of fear, who try to deceive themselves and others by calling themselves Americans of the Jewish faith, when they really have no faith.

Real Americanism means not only a toleration of religious differences, but a toleration of ethnic and national differences as well. In fact real Americanism should mean an *active encouragement* of cultural diversity. If we ever achieved cultural uniformity it would be either fascistic or communistic. The promotion of a healthy creative cultural group life among Jews and other minority groups is, in a sense, a saving thing for America and incidentally for the very assimilationists who fear cultural group expression. Jewish community organization is not un-American and will not set up a state within a state. Organization is necessary to give direction and unity and expression to the common interests of the members of a group. And unless we can attain a measure of automony in this country, we will be neither a religion nor a nation, nor a race, but a scattered flock.



Some Aspects to the Intellectual Reaction to Emancipation

by Irving Levitas*

THE problem of the Jewish intellectual in a period of general social transition has rarely been exhibited with as great a variety of material as it was in Germany in the first half of the nineteenth century. The development of German nationalism, prompted by Napoleon, brought about a transformation of the position of the Jew in that country. By reducing the number of sovereign princes, simplifying the geography politically, secularizing the ecclesiastical states and abolishing the Holy Roman Empire, Napoleon affected the birth of the modern world, and, in so doing, changed the character of Jewish life in Western Europe.

The Jewish people were caught in this eddy of political change, and the Sanhedrin of 1805 was an epitome of the new status in Europe. The outstanding feature of this Sanhedrin was that it expressed the cardinal principle of the Emancipation, that the Jews were entitled to equal citizenship with the Gentiles. To Napoleon, as Carleton Hayes points out, equality was greater than liberty. Through various decrees, conquered people were declared equal, but liberty was not assured them. And once Napoleon went down to defeat at Waterloo, the heritage he left behind him did not include the promise of liberty.

This condition of Napoleon's *politik* had its reflection in Germany. The Romantic movement picked up the thesis of Napoleon with respect to nationalism, and, in the hands of Schlegel, Schelling and Fichte, the idea blossomed forth as the background of German nationalism. It soon became evident that in this revival, the concept of liberty *and* equality was conspicuous by its absence. With respect to the Jews, for instance, Fichte could say, "The only way I see by which civil rights can be conceded (to Jews) is to cut off all their heads in one night and to set new ones on their shoulders which should not contain a single Jewish idea." Similar expressions of antipathy resounded throughout the writings of other German nationalists, and it soon became apparent that equality for the Jews simply implied the right to be condemned and maligned. Although Napoleon had freed Germany as a whole, Germany repudiated the participation of the Jews as Jews in that freedom.

This change in circumstance prompted two movements in Jewish life. One was to attempt to develop Jewish life in Germany in such a way as to permit Jewish participation in German life with a minimum of conflict. Arguing on the premise that equality had been denied Jews because they were alien to German culture, men like Zunz, Gans, Friedlander and Moser organized a "Society for Jewish Science" in 1819 to accomplish the purpose of "modernizing" Jewish life. This was the society that Heinrich Heine joined in 1822. "Jewish Science" was to be substituted for "Rabbinic Judaism" and Jewish theology was to be reconciled with German philosophy. The principles of the Society advocated "a total reconstruction of the characteristic culture and an adjustment of the mode of living which has hitherto prevailed among the Jews," due to the "incongruity of the whole internal condition of the Jews with their external position regarding other nations. Jewish culture must be developed to the same degree as that reached by the rest of the European world." This thesis led to Gans' statement, "Any part of Judaism that cannot maintain itself in its present form in the face of science is not about to fall and in need of aboli-

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tion, but has already fallen and been abolished."

This statement by Gans is typical of the whole philosophy of the movement in that it is definitely Hegelian in character. For Hegel was the acknowledged leader of intellectual Germany at this time, and it was with his principle of idealistic dialectics that the Society interpreted Jewish life. And it was for this reason, primarily, that the Society failed to affect Jewish life. I am not neglecting various other factors involved, notably, the general antipathy mentioned above towards Jewish emancipation by the German intellectuals and that expressed by the Prussian government when it prohibited rabbinical sermons in German, the preaching of which was defended by Zunz in his *Die Gottesdienstliche Vortrage*. But, from the point of view of the Jewish group in itself, I think that the Hegelian dialectic prevented a successful solution of the problem of Jewish emancipation through its emphasis on the temporality of Jewish ideology.

The general principle of these Hegelians, or Young Hegelians as they were called, was that there are certain principles in social development that were triadic in form, called thesis, antithesis and synthesis, which characterized the development of society. When the non-Jewish Young Hegelian interpreted Judaism, for instance, it was as a preliminary stage of Christianity. Feuerbach analyzed Judaism as a religion that had crawled into the nooks and crannies of bourgeois society to exploit its uncertain elements; therefore it was a religion of trickery and cunning. To Bauer, the Jew could only be emancipated when he was converted to Christianity, and then, through the use of Hegelian philosophy, emancipated himself.

In making these assertions, Bauer drew the fire of Marx on his head. Marx claimed that political emancipation was not enough. Human emancipation was necessary. The state in which emancipation was desired was still a theological state; religion was considered necessary. To Marx, emancipation of the Jew, as of the Christian, could only be accomplished by emancipation from both Judaism and Christianity. "Political emancipation is the reduction of man to a member of bourgeois society, to the egotistic independent individual; only when the real individual re-absorbs the abstract citizen of the state and makes him a social being, will the emancipation of humanity be accomplished."

This attitude was arrived at independently by Heine, although expressed in other terms. He knew Marx well, and could say, with reference to this association, "We need very few signs to understand each other." Yet Heine's analysis of the problem, similar in principle as it was to this of Marx, was based on different premises than his. Characterizing the work of the Society as abortive, Heine adopted the second of the two attitudes taken by the Jewish intellectual towards the problem of Jewish emancipation. He had pointed out some time before in a letter to Zunz that the organ for the Society, *"The Journal for Jewish Science,"* was not understood by the masses, and he was more and more convinced that the policy of the Society was fruitless.

In the first place, Heine felt that the goal was wrong. To him the idea of reconciling Judaism with German philosophy was fallacious. It was a matter of perpetuating rabbinical Judaism or nothing. A short trip to Poland had convinced him that only this type of Judaism could save Jewish life. The compromise desired by the Society was similar to a surgical operation, and in Heine's words, "on account of their unskillfulness and their cobweb bandages of reason, Israel must bleed to death." To Heine, "the Jews must perforce arrive at the conviction that they would only then be truly emancipated when the emancipation of the Christians was entirely achieved and secured." The Jewish cause was identical with that of the German people as a whole, and it should be "not as Jews alone that they should demand

that which was long ago their due as Germans."

This emancipation must come as soon as possible, because, as Heine saw the situation of the Jews, there would not be many Jews left who would prefer the faith of their fathers to the welfare of their children. Once this emancipation came, rabbinical Judaism would exist, with no necessity for compromise. He knew full well the cause for the existent anti-Semitism, saying, "Antipathy against the Jew has no longer a religious ground with the upper classes, and with the lower classes it is transformed more into social spite against the overpowering might of capital." The removal of these economic maladjustments was absolutely requisite for Jewish life.

Heine felt a strong tie with Judaism, and participated in his fight for social freedom with this idea continually in his mind. This definite Jewish strain in his life and thought was evidenced on numerous occasions; the attack on David Friedlander for suggesting the acceptance of every Christian dogma except that of the divinity of Jesus (1826); the attack on Platen, who had accused him of being a baptized Jew, Heine's sore spot (1930); his espousal of St. Simonism as a repudiation of the Paulinian repudiation of the flesh (1832); his interpretation of Spinoza, whom he idealized as a Jewish prophet (1934); the fragment on *Rabbi von Bacharach* (1840); his statement that the Jews were the Swiss Guard of deism; and, finally, his own description of himself on his mattress grave, not as a "corpulent Hellene," but as a "poor Jew"—all these are exemplary of his association with Jews and Judaism.

In his attitude towards Judaism, Heine is connected with another great Jew of this period, Ferdinand Lassalle. In his letter introducing Lassalle to Varnhagen, he says, "My friend, Herr Lassalle, who brings you this letter, is a young man of the most distinguished intellectual powers. . . . I should say that Lassalle is a definite and declared modernist. He will have nothing to do with the renunciation and modesty with which we are accustomed more or less hypocritically to dream and prate away our time." Here again, Heine exhibited his acumen in discerning talent and genius, typical of the new age.

There are many points of comparison between Heine and Lassalle. Both were Jews, yet it fell to neither to contribute to what are considered the ordinary channels of Jewish thought. Both participated as young men in a society which had as its purpose the propagation of thought among Jews in order, as Lassalle put it, "to reconcile Judaism with the present." Both of them left the societies, Heine that of Zunz, Lasalle that of Criezenbach. Heine's reasons were discussed above; Lassalle left his society because he felt that it was an attempt to hold back "the dialectical flow of history. History resembles the human organism; it can never reincorporate into its digestive destructive process a subtsance which has already been digested." The Hegelian dictum that "What is real is rational, what is rational is real"—the algebra of revolution, as Herzen called it—was a fundamental truth to Lassalle. What he could not conceive as rational could not be real; it was non-existent, or should be.

Lassalle's attitude towards Judaism was similar to that of Marx and Heine, in that it was subsumed under the general problem of social emancipation. Yet he, as Heine, exhibited the same relationship to Judaism—that of psychical affirmation. He considered himself a good Jew, "although I disregard ceremonial laws, as if one cannot eat *traif* and be a good Jew." At the time of the Damascus affair in 1840 he could say, "I could, like the Jew in Lytton's *Leila,* risk my life to deliver the Jews from their present downtrodden state. I would not even shrink from the scaffold, could I but make them a respected people." In writing to Marx about the Harzfeldt affair, he said, "Therefore I, a youthful Jew without influence, uprose against the most terrible powers," a statement typical of his romanticism; and, in a moment of cyni-

cism, "I am a Jew and a journalist, and I despise them both."

Thus we see, in this brief analysis of the position of the Jews in Germany and the effect it had on the thought of three Jewish intellectuals, Marx, Heine and Lassalle, the source of the current trend in Jewish life to discuss the problems of Judaism as parts of a larger problem. To these men, the Jewish problem was one that could only be approached *after* other social problems had been solved. Then, and only then, could one discuss the development of Judaism as a vibrant culture. As Heine and Lasalle pointed out, to attempt to compromise Jewish life through adaptation to the existing non-Jewish environment was only to fall from the frying pan into the fire; to release unique Jewish values for a presumable freedom, which was a chimera, since the non-Jewish world was similarly enslaved by bourgeois attitudes. The emancipation of humanity was a definite prerequisite for Jewish emancipation.

The point to be emphasized, that point so frequently forgotten in a discussion of these men, is that they felt themselves to be acting as Jews in their fight for human emancipation. They differed from the other Jewish intellectuals only in that their field of activity was the broader world; but their goal was the same—that of ultimate Jewish emancipation.

CORRESPONDENCE

Sirs:

In the editorial of your issue of May 20th, in which you criticize the elections of the American Jewish Congress in that it seeks "to secure a mandate from the masses of American Jewry," and in which you rightly express your doubts about the methods pursued by the American Jewish Congress, you also refer to the Jewish Peoples Committee as a "united front group organized by the Jewish Bureau of the Communist Party (that) has actually launched a similar campaign to gather the votes by which it hopes to gain recognition as official Jewish spokesman."

I have no desire to discuss the charge that our committee is "Communist," beyond the statement that anyone who has taken the trouble to make a study of the representation at our last national convention in March, or of the membership of our National Executive Board, must convince himself of how ridiculous this charge is. I do not know what percentage of Jews make up the 75,000 members claimed by the Communist Party. One thing must be certain though; if all Jewish Communists were in the Jewish Peoples Committee they would still make a very small fraction of the 308,000 Jews affiliated with us. There are Communists in the Jewish Peoples Committee, and we welcome them into our ranks, since we found them to be very sincere fighters against fascism and anti-Semitism, and this is what we are interested in. Such a policy, by the way, has been urged by many of your contributors who, I doubt, can be classed as Communists.

I do want, however, to correct the impression you have that our committee also seeks a mandate to speak for the entire Jewish people. The opposite is true. From our very inception, a major point in our program was bringing about unity of the various existing Jewish organizations. Also, in the present election of the American Jewish Congress we were of the opinion that a way might be found in which all Jewish groups could cooperate on a minimum program. It is our earnest belief that the time has come which makes united action of the various Jewish organizations not only necessary, but also possible. So far as our committee is concerned, we are not only ready to cooperate in such a movement organized on a democratic basis, but I might go further and say that, when such a movement will really represent the majority of the Jewish people and will be devoted to a struggle of defending our people against the onslaughts of fascism and anti-Semitism, at such a time our committee would be dissolved.

We differ with the policy of other Jewish organizations not so much in principle as in methods of fighting fascism and anti-Semitism. It is our opinion that one should not only talk against fascism, but also fight it. We agitate for our program in a straightforward way. We perfectly agree with you that "the road to Jewish unity can lie only in a formula for cooperation among the representatives of all leading national Jewish organizations," allowing for the genuine ideological differences that separate these groups. So far as our committee is concerned, we will gladly cooperate with any agency that will earnestly seek to bring this about.

Sincerely yours,

E. SCHWARTZMAN, *National Secretary,*
Jewish Peoples Committee for United Action Against Fascism and Anti-Semitism,
New York, N. Y.